



School Meals & Other Debt Policy

Nova Primary School Governor Information	
Model Policy	No
Local Changes	
Customisation*	
Originally Adopted	Summer 2016
Last Review Date	June 2023
Next Review Date	June 2024
* additions made to policy (eg local detail) but not a change to any policy structure	

History of most recent Policy changes – Must be completed

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, change in legislation
May 2018	3	Insertion of point 7 to provide clarification on a chargeable packed lunch	Review of policy
May 2018	4	Split policy for a website version and internal use	Review of policy
May 2018	4	Added in additional action to Level 2	Review of policy
June 2021	2	Changed to Lead Learning Mentor	Review of policy
June 2021	3	Heading changed to School Meals	Review of policy
June 2021	3	Inserted new section for Music Lessons	Review of policy
June 2021	3	Inserted new section for After School CLub	Review of policy
June 2021	3	Inserted new section for Outstanding Debts	Review of policy
June 2021	7 & 8	Inserted sentence regarding music lesson debt to Appendix 1 & 2	Review of policy

June 2022	4	School Meals – changed bullet points 7 & 8 to reflect current procedure	Review of policy
June 2023	3	Changed wording in paragraph 1 to simplify & added in 'residential camps'	Review of policy
June 2023	3	Online payment system – added in all items that can be paid online	Review of policy

School Meals and Other Debt Policy

Rationale

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents for chargeable items. This includes school dinners that don't come under the Free School Meals scheme, i.e. those children who are in KS2 and are not eligible for a free school meal, music lessons, and residential camps. The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity and consistency in managing the debt and to help parents understand clearly what is expected of them and the procedures the school will follow to recover the debt.

The school meals service is a business and as with any business the meals that are taken must be paid for. School budgets are reducing year on year and we do not have the ability to write off dinner money debt or the capacity in the office to spend time trying to recover payment from families who have not paid for the service or meals their children have taken. On very rare occasions decisions may need to be taken as to whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. If this is the case the parent/carer will be contacted and asked to come into school with payment or a packed lunch. Of course welfare of the child is at the heart of everything that Nova Primary stands for. In cases where a child comes to school regularly without either money for a school dinner or a packed lunch it may raise welfare or child protection concerns. In these circumstances the safeguarding procedures will be followed and may include a referral to safeguarding agencies.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents/carers who cannot afford school meals and we provide help to parents in obtaining this. In addition, in cases of hardship the school can provide information and access to foodbanks. Our Lead Learning Mentor is able to provide support and advice about foodbanks.

Where there is a problem regarding payments the Governing Body at Nova Primary School expects the parents and school to work together to resolve it quickly. However, it considers a zero tolerance approach works best and follows the procedure outlined in this policy which may culminate in external debt collection agencies being employed and possible litigation.

The school has an online payment system which parents can use to pay for school dinners and other items such as music lessons, trips and residential camp, via bank transfer.

The school makes parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school website

School Meals

- All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
- All children in Key Stage 1 are entitled to a free school meal under the Universal Free School Meal scheme.
- All school meals must be paid for in advance.
- Parents should not expect their child to be given a meal unless they have paid for it IN ADVANCE or they have credit on their online account.
- Parents who do not wish their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch.
- All children who are entitled to a free school meal will be provided with a meal unless they have indicated that they have a packed lunch.
- When parent fails to pay for a school meal in advance, or provide their child with a packed lunch, the child will be permitted to select from the menu and the parent will receive a text or call from the school office requesting payment to be made that day.
- Parents who fail to pay for the outstanding meal and another meal is requested, the child will not be permitted to select from the menu but will be given a chargeable packed lunch. This packed lunch will be provided by the school kitchen and will be charged at the same rate as school meals.
- A parent that continues to send a child to school without money for a school meal or a packed lunch may be subject to safeguarding concerns. This could constitute a form of neglect, but in all cases this will be discussed with the family in the first instance before any decision is made to involve safeguarding agencies i.e. Families In Focus or First Response.

Music Lessons

- Before a parent/carer signs up for music lessons for their child they are made aware that the commitment is for music lessons for the academic year (33 in total), and are required to sign an agreement to pay for the lessons, termly in advance, for the full year.
- Payments need to be made in advance and before the start of each term. Children will not be able to attend a music lesson without payment.
- No refunds will be made for non-attendance for any reason by pupils; however, should the teacher be absent a credit/refund will be made the following term.
- If a child no longer wishes to carry on with lessons, payment will still be required. We will however make every effort to offer their place to another child therefore passing on the commitment, however if we are unsuccessful in this payments will still need to be met.

After School Club (ASC)

- All spaces in After School Club must be pre-booked and paid for in advance. Refunds will only be given where 2 working days' notice has been given of a cancellation.
- Failure to pay for the space in advance will result in the parent/carer being contacted to collect their child at the end of the school day instead of being admitted to After School Club.

Outstanding Debts

Parent/carers must clear all outstanding debts before taking on other financial commitments with school, e.g. Dinner money, music lesson, ASC debts, etc. must be settled before signing up for extra curricular activities such as music lessons or residential camps. Any monies received will be used to settle the first debt created.